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(To be Continued.)

"I can't promise that, dad. It isn't a sane request. I am your son."

"My God, boy, don't you see that I can't bear to look at you through these bars? Go! Please go! Goodbye. Write to me, but don't come here again. Don't! It's only a few years."

He turned away abruptly, his shoulder drawn upward as if in pain, and Graydon left the place, weakened and sick at heart.

Jane and Droom were awaiting him in an outer office. The former looked into his eyes searchingly, tenderly.

"I'm so sorry, Graydon," she said as she took his hand in hers.

All the way back to Chicago Elias Droom sat and watched them from under lowered brows, wondering why it was that he felt so much lonelier than he ever had felt before—wondering too, in a vague sort of way why he was not able to exult, after all.



CHAPTER XXX.



JANE was ill and did not leave her room during the two days following the visit to the penitentiary. She was haunted by the face of James Bansemer, the convict. It was beyond her powers of imagination to recall him as the well-groomed, distinguished man she once had known. Graydon was deeply distressed over the pain and humiliation he had subjected her to through Droom's unfortunate efforts.

The fact that she could not or would not see him for two days hurt him more than he could express, even to himself. The day before he left for New York, however, she saw him in their parlor. She was pale and quiet.

Neither mentioned the visit to the prison. There was nothing to say. "You will be in New York next week?" he asked as he arose to leave. His spirit was sore. She again had told him that he must not hope. With a hysterical attempt to lead him on to other topics she repeated her conversations with Teresa Valesquez, urging him, with a hopeless attempt at bravado, to seek out the Spanish girl and marry her. He laughed lifelessly at the jest.

"We will leave Chicago on Monday. Father will have his business affairs arranged by that time. I would not let him resign the presidency. It would seem as if I were taking it away with him. We expect to be in Europe for six or eight months; then I am coming back to New York, where I was born, Graydon, to work."

He went away with the feeling in his heart that he was not to see her again. A single atom of determination lingered in his soul, however, and he tried to build upon it for the future. Rigby's wedding invitation had come to him that morning, almost as a mockery. He tore it to pieces, with a scowl of reollection.

Droom's effects were on the way to New York. He hung back, humbly waiting for Graydon to suggest that they should travel east on the same train. His grim, friendless old heart gave a bound of pure joy, the first he had known, when the young man made the suggestion that night.

Together they traveled eastward and homeward, leaving behind them the gray man in stripes.

Jane's six months in Europe grew into a year, and longer. It was a long but a profitable year for Graydon Bansemer. He had been enriched not only in wealth, but in the hope of ultimate happiness. Not that Jane encouraged him. Far from it. She was more obdurate than ever with an ocean between them. But his atom of determination had grown to a purpose. His face was thinner, and his eyes were of a deeper, more wistful gray. They were full of longing for the girl across the sea and of pity and yearning for the man back there in the west.

He had told her and well. He had won. The shadow of '99 was still over him, but the year and a new ambition had lessened its blackness. Friends were legion in the great metropolis. He won his way into the hearts and confidence of new associates and renewed fellowship with the old. Invitations came thickly upon him, but he resolutely turned his back upon most of them. He was not socially hungry in these days.

Once a week he wrote to his father, but there never was a reply. He did not expect one, for James Bansemer, in asking him to write, had vowed that his son should never hear from him again until he could speak as a free man and a chastened one. True to his promise, Graydon instituted no movement to secure a pardon. He did, by a strong personal appeal, persuade Denis Harbert to drop further prosecution. There were enough indictments against his father to have kept him behind the bars for life.

Elias Droom had rooms in Eighth avenue, not a great distance from Herald square. He was quite proud of his new quarters. They had many of the unpleasant features of the old ones in Wells street, but they were less garish in their affront to an aesthetic eye. The incongruous pictures were there, and the oddly assorted books, but the new surroundings had a

charm for life in the broader windows, the cook stove was in the rear, and there was a venerable Chinaman in charge of it; the bedroom was kept so neat and clean that Droom quite feared to upset it with his person. But, most strange of all, was the change in Droom himself.

"I retired from active work," he informed Graydon one day when that young man stared in astonishment at him. "What's the use, my boy, in Elias Droom dressing like a dog of a worldling when he is a gentleman of leisure and affluence? It surprises you! I see me in an evening suit, eh? Well, by Jove, my boy, I've got a dinner jacket, a Prince Albert and a silk hat. There are four new suits of clothes hanging up in that closet," he said, adding, with a sarcastic laugh: "That ought to make a perfect gentleman of me, oughtn't it? What are you laughing at?"

"I can't help it, Elias. Who would have dreamed that you'd go in for good clothes?"

"I tried to dream about it long ago. I swore if I ever got back to New York I'd dress as New Yorkers dress—even if I was a hundred years old. I've got a servant too. What d'ye think of that? He can't understand a word I say, nor can I understand him. That's why he stays on with me. He doesn't know when I'm discharging him, and I don't know when he's threatening to leave. What do you think of my rooms?"

It was Graydon's first visit to the place, weeks after their return to New York. He had not felt friendly to Droom, since the day at the prison, but now he was forgetting his resentment in the determination to wrest from him the names of Jane's father and mother. He was confident that the old man knew.

"Better than Wells street, eh? Well, you see, I was in trade then. Different now. I'm getting to be quite a fop. Do you notice that I say 'By Jove' occasionally?" He gave his raucous laugh of derision. "Dined at Sherry's the other night, old chap," he went on with raw mimicry. "They thought I was a Christian and let me in. I used to look like the devil, you know."

"By the Lord Harry, Elias," cried Graydon, "you look like the devil now."

"I've got these carpet slippers on because my shoes hurt my feet," explained Droom sourly. "My collar rubbed my neck, so I took it off. Otherwise I'm just as I was when I got in at Sherry's. Funny what a difference a little thing like a collar makes, isn't it?"

"I should say so. I never gave it a thought until now. But, Elias, I want to ask a great favor of you. You can?"

"My boy, if your father wouldn't tell you who her parents are, don't expect me to do so. He knows; I only suspect."

"You must be a mind reader," gasped Graydon.

"It isn't hard to read your mind these days. What do you hear from her?" Graydon went back to the subject after a few moments. "I am morally certain that I know who her father and mother were, but it won't do any good to tell her. How's your father?"

After this night Graydon saw the old man often. They dined together occasionally in the small cafes on the west side. Droom could not, for some reason known only to himself, be induced to go to Sherry's again.

"When Jane comes back I'll give you both a quiet little supper there after the play maybe. It'll be my treat, my boy."

The old man worked patiently and fruitlessly over his "inventions." They came to naught, but they lightened his otherwise barren existence. There was not a day or night in which his mind was wholly free from thoughts of James Bansemer.

He counted the weeks and days until the man would be free, and his eyes narrowed with these furtive glances into the future. He felt in his heart that James Bansemer would come to him at once and that the reckoning for his single hour of triumph would be a heavy one to pay. Sometimes he would sit for hours with his eyes staring at the Napoleon above the bookcase, something like dread in their depths. Then again he would laugh with glee, pound the table with his bony hand, and exclaim as if addressing a multitude:

"I hope I'll be dead when he gets out of there. I hope I won't live to see him free again. That would spoil everything. Let me see, I'm seventy-one now. I surely can't live much longer. I want to die seeing him as I saw him that day. The last thing I think of on earth must be James Bansemer's face behind the bars. Ha, ha! It was worth all the years—that one hour. It was even worth while being his slave. I'm not afraid of him. No! That's ridiculous. Of course I'm not afraid of him. I only want to know he's lying in a cell when I die out here in the great, free world. By my soul, he'll know that a handsome face isn't always the best. He laughed at my face, curse him. His face won't be his good looks! Well, well, well, I only hope she's where she can see his face now!"

He would work himself into a frenzy of torment and glee combined, usually collapsing at the end of his harangue. It disgusted him to think that his health was so good that he might be expected to live beyond the limit of James Bansemer's imprisonment.

At the end of eighteen months Jane was coming home. She had written to Graydon from London, and the newspapers announced the sailing of the *Cables*.

"I am coming home to end all of this idleness," she wrote to him. "I mean to find pleasure in toil, in doing good,

in lifting the burdens of those who are helpless. You will see how I can work, Graydon. You will love me more than ever when you see how I can do so much good for my fellow creatures. I want you to love me more and more, because I shall love you to the end of my life."

The night before the ship was to arrive Graydon dined with the Jack Percivals. It was 1 o'clock when Graydon reached his rooms. There he found a note from Elias Droom.

"I have an especial reason," he wrote, "for asking you and Miss Cable to dine with me on Monday night. We will go to Sherry's. Let me know as soon as you have seen her."

Graydon was mystified and not a little upset by this almost peremptory summons from the old man. He hurried over to Droom's quarters the next morning after ascertaining that the steamer would not reach the dock until 2 or 3 o'clock. Droom was at work on one of his amazing models.

"Hello!" he said ungraciously. "I thought I invited you for tonight."

"I want to know something about it, Elias," said Graydon, sitting upon the end of the workbench. "She'll not get in before the middle of the afternoon, and she may not feel like going to Sherry's tonight."

"Just as she likes," said Droom pettishly. "You mean that she would not like to be seen there with me unless there is to be something in it for her, eh?"

"Nonsense! You've got something on your mind, Elias. What is it? Why do you insist on going tonight?"

"I don't. It's tonight or not at all, however. I'm not in the habit of letting people decide when I shall dine at Sherry's. If she doesn't want to come, let her say so." That was all Graydon could get out of him, so he left in a more perplexed frame of mind than before.

He was at the dock long before the steamer came to a stop after its eight days of ceaseless throbbing. She was waving to him from the rail, her face beaming with happiness. It was just as he had seen it in his dreams of this day. More than ever he arrayed his love against her principle. More than ever was he determined to overcome the obstacles which she had thrown up in her self-arrangement.

There was a cold, biting wind blowing, with the suggestion of snow in the skies. The passengers came down with rosy cheeks, colored by the frost laden hours on deck. After the tedious, disagreeable hour with the customs officials the Cables were driven to their hotel. Graydon Bansemer, sitting opposite to Jane in the carriage, was almost speechless with joy and eagerness. The old restraint was still upon him, but it was being worn down by degrees as he gathered encouragement from the clear, inviting eyes of the girl

(Continued on Page 15.)

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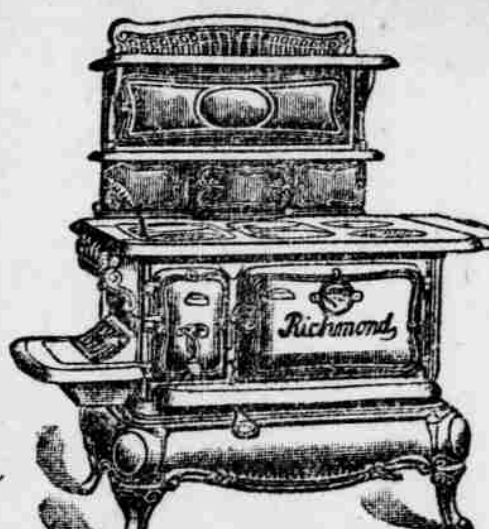
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